



U. S. Department of Justice

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NEW YORK MAN GUILTY OF PASSPORT FRAUD

CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE – United States Attorney Tom Colantuono announced that GARTH RICHARDS, 31, of 510 Riverdale Avenue, Brooklyn, NY, pleaded guilty to committing the offense of passport fraud. RICHARDS was indicted in U.S. District Court in February of 2004, after agents of the U.S. State Department's Diplomatic Security Service uncovered the fraud at the National Passport Center in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

RICHARDS, a citizen of St. Vincent, pleaded guilty to willfully and knowingly making false statements to the State Department in a passport application in order to fraudulently obtain a United States passport. In March, 2001, RICHARDS submitted a passport application in which he claimed that he was born in Greensboro, North Carolina.

U.S. Attorney Colantuono stated: "This is a matter of grave concern. We will do everything possible to make certain that passports are not issued to persons who misrepresent their citizenship or falsify passport applications. Anyone who submits false information or fraudulently poses as a citizen to obtain a United States passport will be prosecuted."

This case resulted from an ongoing initiative known as "Operation Checkmate" which is designed to identify false passport applications that are submitted for adjudication to the National Passport Center in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The National Passport Center processes and adjudicates approximately two million applications each year, or one quarter of all United States passport applications. Operation Checkmate is a joint initiative of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of New Hampshire, the U.S. Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service, the Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General and the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

RICHARDS's sentencing hearing was set by U.S. District Judge Paul Barbadoro for February 22, 2005 at 2:00 PM.. Assistant U.S. Attorney Alfred Rubega is prosecuting this case.